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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/02/12  
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SUBJECT: GBAGBO EXPECTED TO DISSOLVE GOVERNMENT

CLASSIFIED BY: Tanya Salseth, Political Officer, Department of State,  
Embassy Abidjan; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a meeting with the international community on February 12, SRSG Choi confirmed that President Gbagbo intends to announce "institutional changes" within the government in the context of the current political impasse. Although Choi did not have further details, it is widely believed that President Gbagbo will announce that he is dissolving the current government. The news seems to have circulated quickly among the international community in Abidjan, but has not yet reached the Ivoirian population. The potential impact is unknown, as it is still unclear what measures the government intends to take. END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) On February 12, SRSG Choi called a meeting with all resident Ambassadors in Cote d'Ivoire to discuss current electoral and political developments. Charge and Poloff were in attendance. Choi confirmed that President Gbagbo would announce "institutional changes" within the government in a national television broadcast at 8pm that same evening. He said he did not know what measures the government intends to take, but was extremely concerned that the potential "institutional changes" could undo all of the work that has been achieved since the Ouagadougou Political Accord was signed in 2007.

¶3. (C) Choi said that although UNOCI had been under intense pressure to arbitrate the "Mambe affair," he had refused, stating that arbitration is solely the responsibility of the Facilitator's Office. In that role, President Blaise Compaore met with all of the key parties in Ouagadougou on February 11 in an attempt to find a solution to the current impasse. Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) President Robert Mambe attended the meeting, as well as FPI President Affi N'Guessan, RHDP coalition chairman Alphonse Dje Dje Mady, and the RDR Director for Political Affairs Amadou Soumahoro. Choi said that during this meeting, Mambe categorically refused to accept a proposal whereby he would resign of his own accord. This compromise would have ensured that all charges filed against him by the public prosecutor's office would be dropped. [Note: the investigation ordered by the Ministry of Interior found Mambe guilty of all charges of tampering with the list; however, there is disagreement in judicial circles as to whether he is protected by immunity in his position as CEI President. End Note]

¶4. (C) Choi initially speculated that the president's upcoming announcement was a reaction to Mambe's refusal to resign; however, when pressed on this point by the European Commission representative, he backed down, insisting that he did not know if the two events were related. In closing, he urged the international community to speak with one voice on the issue, particularly concerning the provisional electoral list. This list must be upheld, Choi insisted, as any questioning of what has been

decided could lead to an invalidation of all the processes which have led up to it, including the audiences foraines (mobile courts) process, and the identification and voter registration process. He was extremely concerned that all of the work the international community has done to support the process over the last three years could be threatened by these latest developments.

15. (C) COMMENT: As President Gbagbo has not yet specified what changes he intends to make within the government, it is too early to speculate what kind of reaction this might provoke. Much depends on exactly what changes he intends to make and how the message is communicated to the public, though it is likely that whatever changes are made, the opposition will interpret such drastic measures as a power grab. So far, it seems that only the international community is aware of the developments (most informed by the French Embassy). Post will continue to closely monitor developments. END COMMENT  
STANLEY